

VALUES PROFILE INEEL WATER INTEGRATION PROJECT

This values profile has been prepared to serve as background material for the Value Engineering session scheduled April 2-3, 2002. At this session, participants will be developing criteria to help rank subsurface research priorities for the INEEL. The project team was encouraged by stakeholders to provide session participants with a description of the region's prevailing public values to consider alongside technical factors in the criteria-development process.

Brief phone interviews were conducted with a variety of stakeholders to glean value statements that would be useful to this process. The small sampling of eight respondents is not purported to be a scientific study, but the opinions (reported in first person) are instructive nonetheless in their affirmation of the following six values:

- a. Trust in government*
- b. Effective communication and full disclosure of information*
- c. Respect for Idaho's agricultural heritage and its dependence on clean water*
- d. Cleanup as a priority to protect the environment and public health*
- e. Credible science and reduction of uncertainty*
- f. Honesty and integrity*

1. Of what importance is the INEEL to you and your organization/community? What current work is of particular interest and why?

a. I'm really concerned about the cleanup. You get so many different answers from supposed experts; it's quite difficult for the layperson to know what's correct and what isn't. I think that's important, very, very important. You hear the bogeyman stories, and hear from people saying there's nothing wrong, everything's fine. I think somewhere in between lie the answers. All those things cost a lot of money, but I think it's very important that experts from universities, who don't have a political agenda, make recommendations for what's good and what's best for the public. I'm very leery of advice from politicians.

b. On a broad scale, energy-related research is extremely important to growers because the alternate sources of energy include water, and we saw last year how drastically the use of water can affect energy in many ways. We have a stake in protecting the quality of Idaho water, as well as the quantity for agricultural use. We also have the responsibility to protect Idaho water for Idaho water users and ensure it's not lost to downstream interests.

c. The INEEL does not contribute anything to the aquaculture industry, but we do expect them to be good stewards and we pay a lot of attention to what is going on in general. The relationship is not close, and there is not very much two-way communication going

on. We focus on the water quality/quantity concerns in our immediate area. Aquaculture has not gone out of its way to learn about the INEEL, but then again, there is no ongoing communication between the two interests. The INEEL is doing a pretty good job with getting public information out, but it has been even better since the INEEL Oversight Committee has started to do the same.

d. The INEEL is important because just living in this valley, we feel apprehensive about what goes on out there. Anything that can be done to de-mystify the lab would be helpful, particularly regarding cleanup. Research into alternative energy sources is important, so have scientists come over and talk about green energy and other types of research would help us understand that there's more to INEEL than just remediation. I don't know much more than that myself because we rely on groups like the Snake River Alliance to know what's going on and to share the most important information.

e. The INEEL is fairly important to Boise State as the university adds its synergetic expertise to the scientific arena. For the Treasure Valley as a whole, its importance is more on a "nodding" basis – a mild acknowledgment. In my mind, it will be most important how technical research and values are integrated at the end of the day.

f. The INEEL hires many people from Jefferson County, so the Lab produces a direct economic benefit to the county. Cleanup of the water beneath the INEEL also is very important to people in my community. I personally am interested in learning more about the laboratory's GIS capabilities because these capabilities have the potential for improving agricultural productivity. I read a story about GIS systems in the *Farm and Ranch* magazine, and I'd like to learn more about them.

g. The INEEL is very important to my industry and community because of economic impacts and potential to negatively impact a multi-billion dollar agriculture industry. Work on monitoring aquifer is critical. Making sure there is no contaminant migration is critical to agriculture. INEEL needs to continue to monitor. There is a need to increase the ease of public availability and understandability of data.

h. As a member of the Citizens Advisory Board for over 4 years, I understand that the INEEL provides a strong economic impact on the surrounding area. As farmers we like to think that we're the mainstay of the area, but in reality it's the INEEL that provides the economic base. Current work that is of interest to me as a retired farmer and a downwinder is the air pollution and impacts from that pollution and projects that are associated with that.

2. *With respect to protecting the Snake River Plain Aquifer, what factors should we keep in mind as we proceed with our cleanup projects?*

a. I think the scientific facts are extremely important, as long as they're done on a scientific basis. I think the politics are important because it's going to cost money to get the funding necessary to do it, it's going to take political action to do that.

b. First of all, I think we need to avoid listening to the radical voices that would have us lock up the usage of water for all but environmental uses, or environmentally friendly uses. We ought to avoid making even aquifer water inaccessible for legitimate uses, as some people would have us do. We need to look at political realities and budgetary constraints.

c. The number one thing we must have is predictability. Any uncertainty for us clouds our future. Remember, we are not just raising fish. Even small, perceived threats to any part of the food industry have serious implications for us. Sound science comes in to this. Trying to head off the potential problems with the aquifer could be the most important action taken by the INEEL.

The second priority is real credible monitoring and monitoring by multiple entities. We couldn't really be considered one of those entities as we're primarily monitoring for nitrates and various nutrients. Besides radioactive materials, it would be helpful to have full disclosure and better explanation of other contaminants at INEEL, such as heavy metals. We also need better exposure of the on-the-ground remediation that is occurring because we need to build a better perception that things are not out of hand. We do have investors, you know.

d. Keep the focus on science, first and foremost. These problems are going to need better science to solve, if they can be solved at all. Your last priority should be relying on public opinion and politics because of the distortion that occurs. Politics serve as a refractor of what is true. Actually, we need to acknowledge the limitations of science and help folks recognize that the solutions to some questions may just be out of our grasp. Take Chernobyl for example. Science can't really do anything to fix that mess – all you can do is mitigate. Sometimes certain tradeoffs just have to be made, depending on what science can do to help contain the waste and how much we can spend.

e. There has to be two-way dialogue about all aspects of aquifer contamination – the technical issues, characterization, transport. You need to be open and honest with the public and get away from the DOE “double-speak” that made Cecil Andrus so angry. Agencies should live up to their word – make the commitment and spend the money. Don't renege on promises.

f. Maximize the benefit for every dollar spent on cleanup. Develop methods for measuring the benefits of cleanup and communicating those measures. Reduce contaminants. I am less concerned about radioactive contaminants than I am about other types of contaminants (i.e., metals and organics) at the INEEL.

g. INEEL actions are interrelated with everything in the area including the economics and quality of life in southern and eastern Idaho.

h. The aquifer is the number two resource in Idaho after the Snake River itself. As a sole source aquifer it provides 1M cubic feet of water. Water for trout, and drinking water for about 200,000 folks. Protection of the aquifer should be a top priority.

3. *From your perspective [or that of your community/organization], what are the most important public values and attitudes for us to understand as we set our research priorities?*

a. I think it is important that you listen to the public. I think it is important that the public be informed prior to making decisions, because so often people make decisions on what people say, sometimes they have political ramifications, sometimes don't. It is very important that you inform the public of what the dangers are or what the possibilities are.

b. One of the most important things to understand that perhaps the most vocal of the people who would label themselves as stakeholders may not reflect the main stream values. I'm talking about those who would say there is no legitimate interest in using Idaho water for research that we ought to be carrying out in your realm. More specifically, the radical environmentalist, radical recreationists and others who would ally themselves together to lock Idaho water up from legitimate agricultural and scientific uses should (not) be considered as main stream public values. Agriculture, multi-use proponents and other main stream stakeholders ought to be viewed as the majority, rather than those who are perhaps better organized and better funding.

c. Despite efforts to expand the economy in the Magic Valley, agriculture-connected industry is still number one, so irrigation water is underpinning the economy. This is not incidental – it is fundamental to the public here in the Magic Valley and many outsiders do not understand this. It is the same with the Upper Snake, but perhaps less so in Ada County where high tech industries are moving in. Any perception of a serious problem with our irrigation water would be disastrous for agriculture and for the entire food industry.

d. In the Wood River Valley we seem to value most the pristine character here, as well as the recreation values. Just knowing these unspoiled places exist is important, even if we don't use them. Trust is the other huge value for us. It is earned and not handed out freely. There is an inherent distrust of the INEEL, and that is a tough one to overcome given past incidents and the lock-down atmosphere out there.

e. The highest values are, again, trust in government, respect of long-term residents, and respect and acknowledgment of the Idaho sense of place. We must realize that locals have knowledge and wisdom that will help in problem solving. They see and notice things that sometimes we do not.

f. The primary values are maintaining the quality of life we enjoy in southeastern Idaho and protecting human health. People have a fear of what is being done at the INEEL and the INEEL should be working to reduce those fears. There's a perception that a lot of

money is being spent at the INEEL with little benefit. The INEEL also should be working to reduce that perception.

g. It is important that the quality of life in Idaho be preserved and protected. It is essential that INEEL be a good steward, citizen, and partner in preservation of our quality of life. The INEEL needs to protect the aquifer. INEEL needs to weigh environmental and economic impacts in its decision making. INEEL needs to consider environmental impacts such as scenic beauty and wildlife in its decisions. INEEL needs to develop and manage a long-term environmental vision.

h. Educate the public more on what is going on out at the INEEL. There is paranoia that does not need to exist if there was more education for the public.